

Tennessee Pollution Prevention Partnership Success Story



David Lipscomb Elementary
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The Butterfly Garden

The Member

David Lipscomb Elementary School (PK-4th grade) enrolls approximately 380 students. The school is a private Christian institution, with 46 faculty and staff. It is part of the Campus School system of Lipscomb University, located in Nashville, TN. Students and faculty created and maintain butterfly gardens to provide habitat for migrating Monarch butterflies as they pass through Tennessee. The campus has been designated Monarch Waystation #1056 through the Monarch Watch program. While developing this site, students and teachers embarked on a journey of learning about the web of life, land and water conservation, and the values of recycling.

The Story

Our interest in Monarchs began 10 years ago with a question: "Where did the caterpillars come from?" Our younger classes were watching as classroom-reared Monarch caterpillars grew and changed into beautiful butterflies. Soon they were planting milkweed in the courtyard and collecting eggs as "wild" Monarchs visited.

In the beginning, however, there were no flowers for butterflies to visit and only hard-packed playground dirt. With the help of faculty, parents, volunteers, and some donated milkweed plants, a small garden began. Kindergartners added more host and nectar plants, as well as vegetables in a raised bed. Soon all kinds of butterflies were attracted to the gardens. Students of all grades began to observe, count, and compare butterflies. We have also become 'citizen scientists' as we rear, tag, and track Monarchs each year. Our campus provides everything (food, water, shelter) needed to sustain Monarchs as they travel their migration route through North America.

Now the garden is expanding, and we are in the middle of construction of an outdoor classroom. This area will include the butterfly garden, a TN garden, a frog pond and rain collection unit, a math patio, a human sundial, and amphitheater.

The Success

As interest in butterflies spread through each grade level, teachers began using the butterfly project in cross-curricular ways. Metamorphosis and environmental needs were discussed in Science. Graphs plotting gender and kinds of butterflies were made in Math. Calendar and

counting skills were practiced. Map skills and cultural studies were part of discussions of migration to Mexico in Social Studies classes. Butterflies became the topic for phonics, spelling, and journaling. Bible classes included God's wonderful creation of butterflies; students learned Spanish so they could write to their Mexican pen pals. In Art, creativity developed while making paper butterflies.

As 'citizen scientists' we learned that it takes teamwork and time to complete a project. We also learned that Monarchs from Tennessee really do make it to Mexico for the winter. In 2003, three Monarchs reared at David Lipscomb were recovered in Mexico! They faced many dangers and flew over 1300 miles!

Perhaps the most important outcome was gaining an understanding that each one of us is part of a bigger world. While tracking the tri-national migration of Monarchs, students learn that everyone has a responsibility to protect and provide for butterflies.



The Pollution Prevented

While studying Monarch butterflies, students have learned that creating and conserving appropriate habitat is essential. Our 1,014 ft² of garden is expanding to 3,054 ft². Students have become aware of litter and 'dumping', which could endanger butterflies. They can now see ecological connections between the needs of butterflies, other creatures, and people. We began selling aluminum cans for donations to Monarch Watch for butterfly tags. In 2006-07 we recycled 165 lbs and donated \$60. This year we have already recycled 75 lbs. Our future looks bright because students at David Lipscomb are becoming conservationists!

October 2007